

# Hawaii MARINE ON POINT

HAWAII MARINE D SECTION

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## Home again

Service members return to K-Bay from tour in Iraq

Story and Photos by  
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Approximately 200 Marines and Sailors from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363 and Combat Service Support Group 3, returned home March 21 after completing a seven-month deployment in Iraq in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Ecstatic family and friends greeted the returning service members as they debarked the plane just outside of Hangar 5. The U.S. Marine Forces, Pacific Band ensured the heroes' homecoming was a grand event as they provided a soundtrack to go with the tearful and jovial reunions. There was a twinkle in the eye of each returning service member and for good reason; the return was the first time in the seven months that many of them got a break from supporting the war efforts.

"(They were there) 7 months, worked 7 days a week, 12 on 12 off and then some," said Capt. Juliet N. Barnes, assistant operations officer, MALS-24, of the demanding work environment on deployment.



Sergeant Marco Nevarez, Helicopter Dynamic Component Mechanic, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24, admires his son after arriving home.

Each unit did what they could in support of the war and, according to Gunnery Sgt. Lonnie Foster, detachment staff non-commissioned officer-in-charge, MALS-24, their tour in Iraq was, "extremely successful."

Foster said, "MALS-24 played a vital role out there." During their time in country eight MALS-24 Marines received some form of commendation. Individual efforts played a big role in MALS-24's success with one of their own responsible for conducting key inspections on a daily basis for CH-53D's as well as cross training on F-18's and other aircraft supported by MALS-16 and MALS-29. In addition, a MALS-24 Marine was an expeditor for every forward operating base in the Al Anbar province and an aviation supply Marine was taken out of his military occupational specialty and maintained generators for various weather stations. According to Foster, "He kept the generators running full mission capable, without which, the stations could not support flight operations."

Foster believes that MALS-24's presence during the turnover of the Air Combat Element was one of the biggest contributions to the war.

"One of the biggest impacts MALS-24 had was the fact that we were there during the turnover of the ACEs when the core MALS switched from MALS-16 to MALS-29," said Foster. "MALS-24 was the one constant entity with the only

staff non-commissioned officers and essentially, duty experts on deck during that time so everything fell on our shoulders from a maintenance and administrative standpoint."

One MALS-24 aviation supply Marine was awarded a Combat Action Ribbon and Army Achievement Medal for his service during the war. Cpl. Jeffrey M. Trindle was part of a Military Transition Team. Along with Iraqi soldiers he went on patrols and raids, identified traps and encountered insurgents.

For Trindle the experience was a highlight and he said, "(The) best two months of my Marine Corps career was spent doing those raids."

The Marines of 2/3 utilized their time in country by helping to bring stability to the Haditha Triad. During their tour they helped to strengthen the Iraqi police, and during their time there the IP grew from a handful of police to almost 200 policemen and officers, said 1st Lt. Clifton G. Kennedy, assistant operations officer, 2/3.

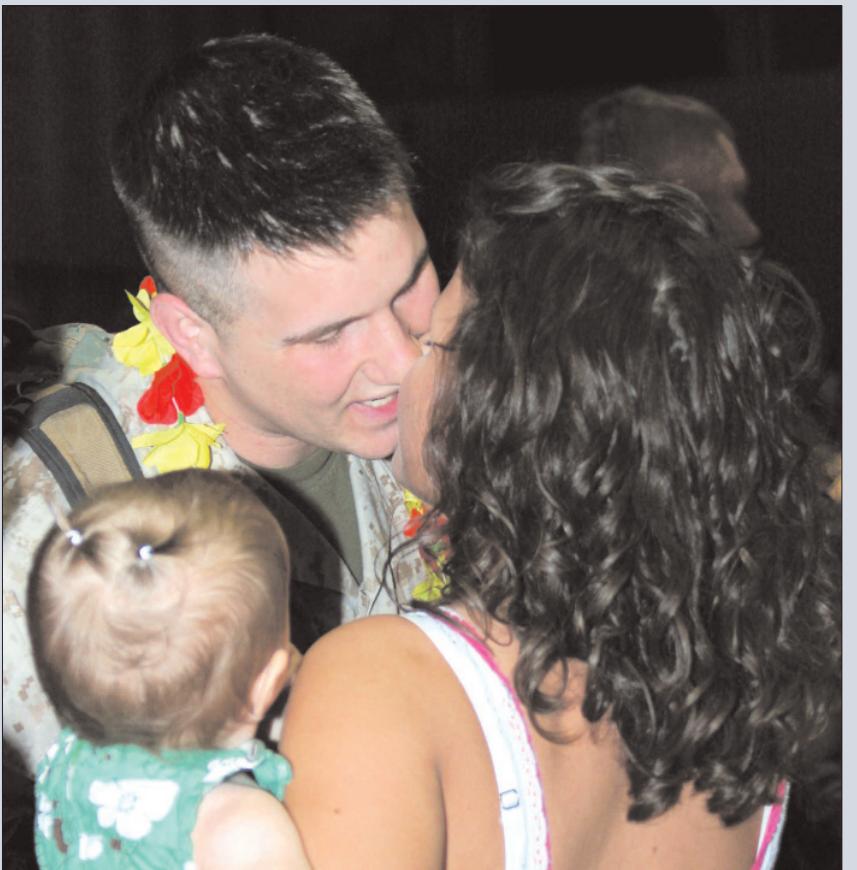
According to Kennedy, 2/3 also partnered with the IP and conducted an operation that shut down the insurgents' freedom of movement into and out of the Triad. They constructed a dirt berm that enclosed the entire Triad and restricted vehicle and pedestrian movement. The battalion also began the process of collecting biometric data from every citizen (known as the BAT system), registering all vehicles, entering them into a database, and then giving the citizens an ID card and registration stickers for their vehicles. The system will allow Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces to decipher the insurgents from the good citizens of the Triad.

"The Island Warriors successfully accomplished its goals of bringing increased security to the Haditha Triad," said Kennedy. "The Battalion partnered with the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army to decrease the insurgent activity in the area significantly. With the increased sense of security, the people of the Triad were able to enjoy some sense of normalcy in their everyday lives."

Kennedy praises the Marines of 2/3 for their pugnaciousness with the insurgents and believes that 2/3's contributions to the region will have a lasting effect.



A young boy welcomes his father back home with a lei at Hangar 5 March 21.



A Marine reunited with his family gives his wife a long-awaited kiss March 21.

"(Second Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment) aggressively fought the insurgency with an iron fist," said Kennedy. "The individual Marines battled the insurgents on the streets with grit and determination daily. 2/3's contributions in the Haditha area were extremely significant. We were successful in bringing stability to a very unstable area. 2/3 was able to create a safe environment that allowed the Iraqi Police to grow and become a presence in the area. This accomplishment will potentially have positive affects on the area for a long time."



Family and friends excitedly await the return of approximately 200 Marines and Sailors from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 24, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363 and Combat Service Support Group 3, at Hangar 5 March 21. The units returned from a seven-month deployment in Iraq in support of the Global War on Terrorism.